



January 6, 2023 Email Blast

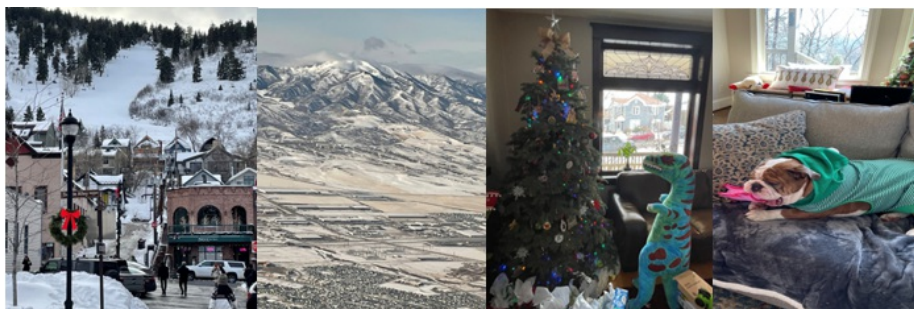
## Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



*2023 Happy New Year!*

Directors,

Happy New Year! Hope your holidays were exactly as you wished. We had a busy time with family visiting from Texas, then a quick visit to Utah to see the grandchildren and finishing the holidays with Ali and Chris spending last week with us. I am sharing a few pictures from our Utah visit as well as Lucy pretending to be an elf. It was a wonderful season to spend with family, friends and even a dinosaur!



Although it is hard to shift from holiday mode, it is time to start a new year with all the hopes, dreams, and optimism we should possess. I am grateful for a fresh start as we have much to accomplish together! Just as a reminder, our priorities continue to be focused on:

- Increased Communication to all Stakeholders
- Parent Satisfaction
- Robust Professional Learning
- Specially Designed Instruction
- Literacy, Math, Behavior
- Develop/Expand General Supervision Monitoring
- Targeted Support for Chronic Disproportionality
- Discipline
- Teacher/Leader Retention

Our new director feature this week is Christy Goforth from Baldwin County Schools. Christy brings a wealth of experience to her role as director. She has also benefited from a strong mentor through the previous director, Traci White. Christy and I discovered we have the north Georgia mountains in common and enjoy visiting many of the same places. Welcome to the mountains - even if just for vacation - for now!

Our staff spotlight is shining brightly on Dr. Emily Adams. We are so excited to have Emily on our team to lead vision and hearing services. She is committed to positive change!

Our district highlight for this week is Calhoun County. Read about how they hosted an event to provide parents with an opportunity to connect with staff members at the school and district level.



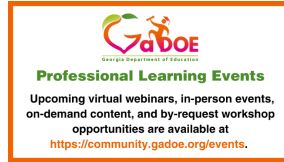
*Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality. - Abraham Lincoln*

“Commitment is the little choices every day that lead to the final results we’re striving for.” -Anonymous

This quote is especially true in our daily work. Every IEP meeting is a series of choices and decisions that will lead to an outcome for a child. Never underestimate the impact of each goal, service and/or support. Even choices made in the initial IEP may impact the outcomes. Resolve to be committed to the very best for each student.

Thank you for your commitment to students with disabilities. You are the leaders of change for this bright, new year. Embrace your commitment!

Keeping Students First,  
Wina



*Professional Learning  
Events*

## Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review the information below and the Due Dates Calendar for deadlines and key dates.

### Professional Learning Events

**January 11 at 11:00 a.m.** – SESBAA: Best Practices from the Field

**January 12 at 3:30 p.m.** – Assistive Technology (AT) Webinar Session 4

**January 19 at 1:00 p.m.** – FY23 Special Education Student Record Basics

**January 19 at 1:00 p.m.** – FY23 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists

### Reminders

**January 10 at 1:00 p.m.** – Director's Webinar

**January 17** – Parent Survey Opens (Located in SE Applications Dashboard; APR Indicator 8)



*Christy Goforth,  
Special Education  
Director, Baldwin  
County Schools*

## New Director Spotlight: Christy Goforth

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Christy Goforth for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Christy Goforth is the Special Education Director for Baldwin County Schools and has been in the field of education for 25 years. Ms. Goforth has been in Baldwin County for 30 years but is originally from a small town in South Georgia known as McRae-Helena. Having a Psychology degree, a Master's in Education and Leadership from Georgia College, and a Specialists degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Nova Southeastern University, Ms. Goforth began her career as a Special Education Paraprofessional in a special education classroom for mild to moderate disabilities. Ms. Goforth also taught at the middle school for 10 years in addition to serving as the Middle School Special Education Coordinator for 10 years. In 2019, Ms. Goforth moved to the central office and became the Special Education Coordinator for Pre-K - 2nd grade for the next four years. Currently in her first year as Baldwin County's Special Education Director, Ms. Goforth shares that it has been a wild ride, but one that she has found both challenging and rewarding.

Crediting her previous Special Education Director, Traci White, for teaching her to work hard and play hard, Ms. Goforth shares that, "Traci always made time for me and encouraged me, daily, to be the best I can be even on days that her schedule was crammed packed with meetings and disgruntled parents. She was dedicated to helping the students and staff of Baldwin County."

Ms. Goforth has a wonderful husband of 25 years and two grown children. She enjoys reading and spending time with her family in their new mountain vacation home in Ellijay, Georgia. She believes every day is an opportunity to be better than we were the day before and that God puts her right where he wants her to be.



*Calhoun County School  
District logo; Special  
Education Director Stephanie  
Paige greeting a parent*

## **District Spotlight: Calhoun County Schools**

On October 24, 2022, the Exceptional Students Program hosted a Parent Drive-

Thru Lunch. Parents were provided with free Chick-Fil-A lunches, snacks, and family resources.

Parents were also able to meet & greet the Special Education Director, Mrs. Stephanie Paige, Parent Mentor Mrs. Brenda Peterson, SPED Teachers & Paraprofessionals. Parents who attended were entered into a raffle for a chance to win a fruit basket. This Parent Drive-Thru lunch was an opportunity for parents to connect with staff members at the school and district level.



*Emily Adams,  
District Liaison,  
GaDOE Division of  
Special Education  
Services and  
Supports*

## **GaDOE Staff Highlight: Emily Adams**

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Emily Adams for our GaDOE Staff Spotlight this week.

Emily has worked in the field of education for eight years. She is a District Liaison with the Results Driven Accountability Unit. She is also the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Vision Impaired Specialist. Prior to coming to work for GaDOE, she worked as a teacher of the Visually Impaired with Northeast Georgia RESA. She began her teaching career in Habersham County serving in many roles in special education. Emily recently completed her PhD in Special Education with a focus on Assistive Technology from the University of Georgia. She is passionate about creating and providing professional development that allows teachers to provide the best interventions and supports for students with sensory loss and multiple disabilities.

Emily is currently working with State Schools to provide opportunities for professional development and communities of practice for Deaf/Hard of Hearing teachers and Teachers of the Visually Impaired across the state. She is also working with the Significant Cognitive Disabilities team to create and implement new trainings and professional development opportunities.

In her free time, Emily enjoys spending time with her family, especially her nephews. She also enjoys traveling and working with non-profits and mission organizations that support people with disabilities. One day, she would like to start her own organization that provides therapies and educational training to special needs orphanages and programs across the world.



*Arrows*

## **Practice Pointers – USED Guidance on Discipline: Question C-8**

### **QUESTION C-8: WHEN A CHILD’S INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP) REQUIRES TRANSPORTATION AS A RELATED SERVICE, ARE BUS SUSPENSIONS SUBJECT TO THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA) DISCIPLINE PROTECTIONS FOR DETERMINING A CHANGE OF PLACEMENT?**

It depends. If transportation is a related service required for the provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (i.e., to assist the child with a disability to benefit from special education) and therefore required to be included in the child’s IEP, a bus suspension must be treated as a suspension under 34 C.F.R. § 300.530, and all of the IDEA’s discipline procedures and protections for eligible children with disabilities would apply. In addition, transportation must be provided to a child with a disability placed in an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) if transportation is required for the child to access the services provided in the IAES. The local educational agency (LEA) is not required to provide alternative transportation to a child with a disability who has been suspended from transportation for 10 school days or less unless the LEA provides alternative transportation to children without disabilities who have been similarly suspended from bus service. 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(d)(3). If bus transportation is not required for a FAPE and is not a part of the child’s IEP, a bus suspension is not considered a disciplinary removal under 34 C.F.R. § 300.530. In those cases, transportation is not part of the provision of a FAPE, and the child and the child’s parent have the same obligations to get the child to and from school as a nondisabled child who has been suspended from bus services. 71 Fed. Reg. 46715 (Aug. 14, 2006).

For more information, please see [Questions and Answers on Serving Children with Disabilities Eligible for Transportation](#) and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) guidance found in [Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions as revised July 19, 2022](#).

## **Excess Cost Calculation Submission**

The Excess Cost Calculation Portal is open for submissions. The Special Education Excess Cost Calculation, which is part of the local district determination's Timely and Accurate Data Submission Report, is due by **January 31**. This submission must be entered into the Consolidated Application and has a two-part sign-off for the results and base calculations. Please plan accordingly as both parts must be submitted by the due date. Resources for the calculation can be found on our [Budget, Grants and Consolidated Application webpage](#). Please contact your budget liaison for further information or technical assistance.

## **Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting: 1% Participation Rate on the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0)**

Refresh your perspective on the characteristics, instruction and assessment of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in a virtual, statewide meeting on Tuesday, January 31, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. -2:00 p.m. Aimed at facilitating the reduction of Georgia's participation rate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment, participants will examine LEA data, discuss instructional needs and gain insight into the Learner Characteristics Inventory to assure districts are making sound decisions for all students.

[Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting Registration](#)

## **Attention Preschool: Babies Can't Wait Report Changes**

GaDOE recently received information from the Department of Community Health and Babies Can't Wait about an upcoming change related to when districts will be notified of students enrolled in IDEA Part C who will be transitioning to IDEA Part B at the age of three. In the past, this report has been generated and shared with districts when a child turned 27 months of age.

Beginning in October of 2022, the report will be sent to districts when a student turns 31 months of age. This change reflects an effort on the part of the Department of Community Health and Babies Can't Wait to provide a more accurate list by removing children who are discharged or lost to follow-up between the ages of 27 months and 31 months. Working together, we can ensure that the transition of young children between these two programs is seamless and that those critical early intervention services continue without interruption. Please share this information with the appropriate individuals and departments in your district.

Please contact Barbara Ross, [barbara.ross@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:barbara.ross@doe.k12.ga.us), or Lynn Holland, [lholland@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:lholland@doe.k12.ga.us) with any questions.



*From left to right: Deanna Williams (NW GLRS Director, Yyanisha Bass Bonner (GaDOE Program Specialist) and Bridget Still (GaDOE Program Specialist) at Georgia Highlands College on December 5, 2022.*

## **Georgia's Back-to-Basics: Behavior Edition**

On December 5, we kicked off the start of our Back-to-Basics: Behavior Edition series with over 100 participants in Ellijay on the campus of Georgia Highlands College through a partnership with Northwest GLRS. Designed for the general and special educator, we were excited to share this information with educators across the region.

Please encourage your teams to register and join us for a one-day professional learning opportunity that will assist both general and special education teachers in addressing challenging behaviors within the classroom. Participants will explore the science of behavior, discuss developmental norms, static and alterable variables, the function of behavior, and avoiding power struggles. Presenters will share research on the power of relationship-building and empowerment and dive into Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) and High Leverage Practices (HLP) for Behavior. All sessions are from 9:00am to



3:00pm. Session locations and dates are listed below:

-January 24, 2023: Coastal Plains RESA - 245 N Robinson, Lenox, GA 31637

-January 30, 2023: East GA GLRS - 4683 Augusta HWY S.E., Dearing, GA 30808

-February 1, 2023: First District RESA - 201 W Lee St, Brooklet, GA 30415

-February 8, 2023: Thompson - Upson Fine Art Center-268 Knight Trail Thomaston, GA 30286

### Back to Basics Behavior Edition Registration

For more information or questions, please contact

Yyanisha Bass Bonner at [Yyanisha.Bass@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Yyanisha.Bass@doe.k12.ga.us) or Bridget Still at [Bridget.Still@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Bridget.Still@doe.k12.ga.us).

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January 13, 2023 Email Blast

## Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



*University of Georgia bulldog  
mascot*

Directors,

Success comes and goes but excellence endures.-  
Anonymous

In many cases, success and excellence are used interchangeably but is that correct? Success is winning the game, having higher earnings than forecasted and/or achieving better outcomes by comparison. Excellence is a relative term related to maximizing potential rather than just winning. In the case of the Georgia Bulldogs football team winning back-to-back National Football Championships, I believe we can agree the team demonstrates success and enduring excellence. Go Dawgs! When our focus is totally on success, we often feel the end justifies the means. Excellence incorporates values into how success is achieved. Excellence demands being confident in the process and adjusting as needed to maximize potential. We won't win every game as there will be highs and lows, but rest assured, excellence leads to success. Commit to excellence!

Our district highlight this week is Forsyth County Schools. GaDOE staff from special education and ESOL provided professional learning to over 150 teachers on January 4. Thank you, Forsyth County, for your collaboration and partnership.

Our new director spotlight is Dr. Robbie Dollar from Candler County Schools. His inspiration comes from students and how they face challenges with determination. Thank you, Robbie, for all you do!



*Excellence*

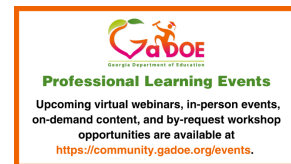
As special educators, we strongly desire success for our students. Maximizing outcomes is what it is all about! Strive for excellence to ultimately find success.

Thank you for your commitment to excellence. You are appreciated!

Keeping Students First,  
Wina

## Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review the information below and the Due Dates Calendar for deadlines and key dates.



*Professional Learning  
Events*

## Professional Learning Events

**January 19 at 1:00 p.m.** – FY23 Special Education  
Student Record Basics

**January 19 at 1:00 p.m.** – FY23 GaDOE Legal Updates: School Psychologists

## Reminders

**January 17** – Parent Survey Opens (Located in SE Applications Dashboard; APR Indicator 8)

**January 31** – Deadline for Excess Cost Calculation Submission (Located in the Consolidated Application in GaDOE Portal)

Visit GaDOE Community for a complete listing of GaDOE Professional Learning Events.

## New Director Spotlight: Dr. Robbie Dollar

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Dr. Robbie Dollar for our New Director Spotlight this week.



*Dr. Robbie Dollar,  
Special Education  
Director, Candler  
County Schools*

Dr. Robbie Dollar is the Special Education Director for

Candler County Schools and has been in the field of education for 23 years. Dr. Dollar previously worked as a classroom teacher, coach, and in various administrative positions. In each of the roles, Dr. Dollar expressed the privilege to work with an array of students, colleagues, parents, and community stakeholders. The opportunities allowed him to explore and embrace the great need for collaboration to fully support student growth and potential.

A story that reminded Dr. Dollar that the challenges in his life were manageable and to be appreciated, as opposed to being overwhelming, was when he witnessed how a young student attacked tasks. Dr. Dollar shared of this student, "Despite [her] difficulties, I never saw her complain or seek assistance. She was determined and more than willing to discover ways to overcome challenges. Her determination and persistence were inspiring to me in a way in which she was never aware."

With his community being special to him, Dr. Dollar has felt an obligation to give it as much as it has given to him over the years. With his faith being important to him and serving as motivation to do the best that he can for others, Dr. Dollar has been married to his wife for thirty years and shares that, "We have been blessed to have three wonderful children: Taylor (son) aged 26, Maggie (daughter) aged 23, and Walker (son) aged 21."



*Forsyth County School District logo*

## **District Spotlight: Forsyth County Schools**

On January 4, 2023, Forsyth County Schools hosted a Professional Learning Day for their staff and requested training from the Georgia Department of Education. Over 150 Forsyth special education and ESOL educators participated in an interactive workshop on collaborative practices to support English Learner Students with Disabilities.

During the workshop, participants explored the importance of collaboration in accurately identifying English Learner status, understanding the learning profile of English Learner Students with Disabilities, and fostering student engagement through collective efforts. Additionally, participants received a digital file with resources to analyze data in a students' learning profile as well as align appropriate learning strategies to increase student achievement. What a great way to begin a new year with our students in mind!



Arrows

## **Practice Pointers – USED Guidance on Discipline: Question D-3 and D-4**

### **QUESTION D-3: WHICH ALTERNATIVE SETTINGS CAN BE CONSIDERED AS AN INTERIM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTING (IAES)?**

While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not specify the alternative setting in which educational services must be provided in an IAES, the determination of an IAES must be selected to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's individualized education program (IEP). This determination will depend on the circumstances of each individual child's case. 20 U.S.C. 1415(k)(1)(D)(i). 71 Fed. Reg. 46722 (Aug. 14, 2006). For example, an IAES could be a different setting in the child's current school, a setting in a different school in the local educational agency (LEA), or in some other setting. Factors that could be considered when determining placement in an IAES include the specific programs and services available in the alternative setting, such as additional counseling services, behavioral and academic supports and other services, or programs that could address the behavior that led to the need for the child's placement in an IAES.

### **QUESTION D-4: WHO DETERMINES THE APPROPRIATE IAES FOR A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY WHEN THE DISCIPLINARY REMOVAL IS A CHANGE OF PLACEMENT?**

If the removal is a change in placement under 34 C.F.R. § 300.536, the child's IEP Team, which includes the parent, determines the IAES for the provision of special education and related services. 34 C.F.R. § 300.531.

For more information, please see the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) guidance found in [Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions as revised July 19, 2022](#).

## **Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Georgia Residential & Reintegration Services Grant**

The Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Georgia Residential & Reintegration Services Grant submission period opens January 1. The updated resources for the Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Residential & Reintegration Services Grant can be accessed on the [Budget, Grants and Consolidated Application webpage](#). The deadline for the submission of these grants is February 15. Don't hesitate to contact your budget liaison if you have any additional questions.



*Parent to Parent of  
Georgia logo*

## **P2P Trainings Available**

In Person: Presented in Spanish and English:

Understanding the School Discipline Process through IDEA and IEPs

Capacitación en persona: Comprender el proceso de disciplina escolar a través de IDEA y IEP

Date: Thursday, January 19, 2023

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Location: Minor Elementary School, 4129 Shady Drive, Lilburn, GA 30047

[Calendar Link](#)

[Spanish Calendar Link](#)

Webinar: Georgia Medicaid Basics and an Overview of Home and Community-Based Services

Date: Friday, January 20, 2023

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

[Registration Link](#)

## Parent Survey

Each year, GaDOE reports on Indicator 8: The percentage of parents who report that the school facilitated parent involvement. GaDOE uses a survey that is disseminated statewide to measure this indicator. What began as a 25-question paper survey is now a 10-question electronic survey. This evolution was a result of multiple years of stakeholder input. Although Indicator 8 measures what is happening at the school level, if you have a parent mentor, their family engagement work, “building bridges between home school and community”, can certainly assist your district with supporting schools to facilitate involvement. Additionally, districts should help parents understand that this is their time to give feedback and their participation is both important and valued. Because the data is real-time and the dashboard is refreshed regularly, districts can act on the feedback in the current school year rather than waiting until the following year to make changes.

We encourage you to make a plan for how you will promote participation in the survey and identify the family-facing staff who can help. A little friendly competition between schools is always fun! As you plan, consider our 6 National PTA Standards for family engagement, and see how many you can incorporate:

- Standard 1: Welcome All Families
- Standard 2: Communicate Effectively
- Standard 3: Support Student Success
- Standard 4: Speak Up for Every Child
- Standard 5: Share Power
- Standard 6: Collaborate with Community

This year the survey link will open on January 17, and remain open until May 31. The link is the same as last year’s link and will be posted on the parent mentor website, the GaDOE website and the P2P website. If you were successful last year and would like to share your strategies (activities, letters, flyers, etc.), please contact Anne Ladd at 470.423.6987 or [aladd@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:aladd@doe.k12.ga.us) so we can continue building capacity across the state.

**Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting: 1%  
Participation Rate on the Georgia Alternate**

## Assessment (GAA 2.0)

Refresh your perspective on the characteristics, instruction and assessment of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in a virtual, statewide meeting on Tuesday, January 31, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Aimed at facilitating the reduction of Georgia's participation rate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment, participants will examine LEA data, discuss instructional needs and gain insight into the Learner Characteristics Inventory to assure districts are making sound decisions for all students.

Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting Registration

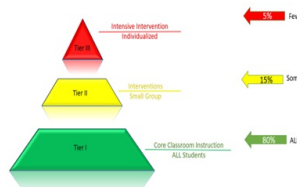
## Statewide Consortia for Teachers of the Visually Impaired

The Division for Special Education Services and Supports and State Schools are hosting a Statewide Consortia for Teachers of the Visually Impaired. Please forward this information to TVIs and/or appropriate personnel in your Local Educational Agency (LEA).

Dr. Emily Adams along with other colleagues will provide important updates about Smokey Powell Clinic, the APH Census, eligibility, state assessments, access to instructional materials, and opportunities for professional development. This consortia will occur virtually on January 20 from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

VI Consortia Registration

For more information, please contact Emily Adams by email at [emily.adams@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:emily.adams@doe.k12.ga.us).



## MTSS Snapshot: What questions should be considered when determining the fidelity of intervention at Tiers II and Tier III?

The foundation of an effective multi-tiered system of supports is ensuring that



Tier I is designed to meet the needs of students, and approximately 80% of students meet the intended target when Tier I is implemented with fidelity. However, approximately 20% of students may require, in addition to Tier I, evidence-based interventions to reach the intended target.

As we reflect on the fidelity of our interventions from first semester, some questions to consider are:

- Were the students receiving the interventions, according to the publisher's guidelines (amount of time, group size, number of days, etc.)?
- Were there fidelity tools in place to monitor the effectiveness of the interventions?
- Did our leadership team use the observation and progress monitoring data from the interventions to determine if additional supports were needed for the staff?
- Was progress monitoring data collected, entered and analyzed in a timely manner to determine the effectiveness of the interventions?
- Did we consider the **Taxonomy of Interventions** as we addressed intervention intensity?

These are just some questions to spark meaningful conversation and help determine if additional resources are needed to support the implementation of interventions at Tiers II and/or III.

For additional information, feel free to reach out to the MTSS regional coaches or Karen Suddeth, [ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us) to learn more.

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January 20, 2023 Email Blast

## Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education

Directors,

One kind word can change someone's entire day! This statement really rings true with me. Words are powerful but delivered with kindness can be so much more. Our daughter, as a young child, would say, "I'll take that back", when she realized she was being sassy. She usually knew just by the look on our faces. Once spoken, words can't be reeled back easily. Being kind to others transcends all settings. As educators, our word choices and delivery can have a profound impact. Words must be impeccably chosen as the effect can be long lasting. Even tough conversations can be delivered with kindness to be considerate to others. Spread some kindness today! You can make a difference in someone's day or even their life.



*One kind word can change someone's entire day!*

Be sure to read the district highlight from Oconee County Schools. In partnership with High School High Tech, students participated in a three-day manufacturing institute while earning industry recognized certifications. Students from North Oconee High School and Oconee County High School earned OSHA-10, Lean Six Sigma White Belt, and CPR/AED certifications. Great job!

Our new director this week is Susan Baker from Floyd County Schools. Susan

brings a wealth of experience to her position. She feels fortunate to have worked along with several wonderful mentors. Having spent the day with Susan on a visit a few months ago, I can attest she is an impressive leader. So happy to have you in this role!



*Kindness changes everything*

Please be sure to register for the virtual 1% Technical Assistance session scheduled for January 31, 2023. Reducing the number of students participating in the GAA is a priority for our state. At present, 80% of LEAs in Georgia are exceeding 1% for participation in the alternate assessment. The United States Department of Education has been clear that our 1% waiver could be in jeopardy unless we can show improvement. Each LEA needs representation from key stakeholders in this important training opportunity.

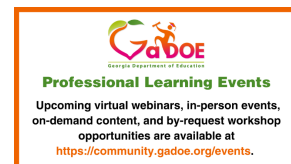
### Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting Registration

If a kind word can change someone's day, be intentional in spreading kindness. Thank you for making a difference through your leadership! Your kindness to students and their families is noticed and appreciated. Kindness changes everything.

Keeping Students First,  
Wina

## Special Education Events & Due Dates

Please review the information below and the Due Dates Calendar for deadlines and key dates.



*Professional Learning Events*

### Professional Learning Events

**January 24 at 9:00 a.m.** – Back to Basics Behavior Edition

**January 24 at 3:00 p.m.** – Accessing Postsecondary Disability Services

**January 26 at 3:30 p.m.** – Accessible Educational Materials Session 4

**January 31 at 3:00 p.m.** – GVRA: Pathful Explore and IEP Goals

**February 1 at 3:30 p.m.** – Significant Cognitive Disabilities Session 5

### Reminders

**January 31** – Deadline for Excess Cost Calculation Submission (Located in the Consolidated Application in GaDOE Portal)

Visit [GaDOE Community](#) for a complete listing of GaDOE Professional Learning Events.

## **New Director Spotlight: Susan Baker**

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Susan Baker, Special Education Director for Floyd County Schools, for our New Director Spotlight this week.



*Susan Baker, Special Education Director, Floyd County Schools*

Susan Baker has been in the field of education for 27 years. Ms. Baker began her teaching career in a self-contained setting for students with emotional and behavioral disorders in Central Georgia. For 13 years, she taught students with intellectual disabilities in Chattooga County, while also leading the assistive technology team and serving as the Regional Advisor for the Georgia Sensory Assistance Project. During that time, she also spent evenings working with Georgia Pines as an Early Intervention Service Provider for children ages birth-three years with multiple sensory impairments.

In 2010, Ms. Baker began teaching in Floyd County working with students with disabilities across all grade levels. In 2015, she became the Special Education Coordinator and then transitioned to Director of Special Education this past spring.

Ms. Baker shared that she has had many wonderful mentors throughout her career in education including Dr. Caroline Holder in Putnam County who, "was an encourager and always a calm presence as I navigated my way through my very first IEP meetings." She found similar encouragement from her two special education coordinators, Dawn Boyd and Linda Castellanos, who taught her many things she uses every day in her current position. As the Special Education Director, Ms. Baker continues to have excellent mentors who are always helpful and have an open door when she has questions. Working closely with the departments of Finance, Federal Programs, Academics, Personnel, and the Superintendent have given her a new appreciation for the amount of collaboration that goes into day-to-day operations and keeping what is best for students at the center of all that they do.

As recent empty nesters, Ms. Baker and her husband, Leslie, enjoy hiking and backpacking out west whenever they get the chance. Those trips also give them an opportunity to visit their son, Lucas, who is studying Chemical Engineering at the Colorado School of Mines. Their daughter, Sarah Anne, will graduate from

Berry College in May and plans to begin her career in education in the fall.



*Oconee County  
Schools logo*

## **District Spotlight: Oconee County Schools**

### **Oconee County students complete three-day Manufacturing Institute through High School High Tech**

Oconee County's special education department has participated in Manufacturing Institute through High School High Tech for the past three years. Manufacturing industries like Kubota, KIA Motors, and Caterpillar employ nearly half a million Georgians. As the manufacturing industry in our state grows, the need for skilled workers grows with it.

The Manufacturing Institute is an exciting opportunity for students to gain industry-recognized certifications that can result in them being more marketable to employers! This is a three-day training experience for HSHT students. The purpose of the training is to learn more about the field of manufacturing, with students earning three certifications that can go on their resumes and assist with obtaining employment as they transition out of high school. Activities include tours, hands-on activities, speakers, and much more.

These certification training sessions exceeded expectations. The presenters have been highly organized, efficient, and informative when providing information and hands-on training to students. It is the belief of director of special education, Suzanne Korngold, that these three days may indeed be the most beneficial three days of several students' high school careers. The county is beyond excited that 15 of their students from North Oconee High School and Oconee County High School will be walking out with an OSHA-10 certification, a Lean Six Sigma White Belt certification, and a CPR/AED certification.





Arrows

## **Practice Pointers – USED Guidance on Discipline: Question D-5**

### **QUESTION D-5: ARE THERE SITUATIONS WHERE A CHILD’S HOME COULD BE AN APPROPRIATE INTERIM ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTING (IAES) FOR A SPECIFIC CHILD WITH A DISABILITY?**

Generally, the appropriateness of an IAES will depend on individual circumstances. For removals under 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(c), (d)(5), and (g), the child’s individualized education program (IEP) Team, which includes the parent, determines the appropriate IAES. 34 C.F.R. § 300.531. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that an appropriate IAES must be selected “so as to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child’s IEP.” Therefore, the IEP Team likely will need to consider other options beyond “home instruction” when determining the appropriate IAES. 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(d). Whether a child’s home would be an appropriate interim alternative educational setting would depend on the particular circumstances of an individual case such as the length of the removal, the extent to which the child previously has been removed from his or her regular placement, and the child’s individual needs and educational goals. Although the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) also recognizes that, for a child who has been removed from their current educational placement for disciplinary reasons, home instruction could be delivered through a virtual, in-person, or hybrid approach, the local educational agency (LEA) should be cautious about excluding a child with a disability from their regular educational program to provide virtual instruction for the sole purpose of responding to a child’s behavior. Removing a child from the regular education program without ensuring behavioral supports have been made available throughout a continuum of placements, including in a regular education setting, could result in an inappropriately restrictive placement and denial of a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

For more information, please see the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) guidance found in *Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA’s Discipline Provisions* as revised July 19,

2022.

## OSEP Dear Colleague Letters -November 2022

Please carefully review the OSEP Dear Colleague Letters below. These letters were released in November 2022. Please discuss and share with leadership and teachers.

OSEP Policy Letter 22-05 (November 1, 2022) Letter to Sharpless Re: Requests for Initial Evaluations

OSEP Policy Letter 22-02 (November 10, 2022) Letter to State Directors of Special Education Re: Ensuring a High-Quality Education for Highly Mobile Children

OSEP Policy Letter 22-06: (November 16, 2022) Letter to Flanigan Re: Parentally-Placed Private School Children with Disabilities



## Access Resources to Support You with Georgia's Public Education EAP

Georgia's Public Education Employee Assistance Program offers a wide variety of resources to help you when you're facing issues that interfere with your health and wellbeing at home or at work, including up to six sessions of mental health counseling. GaDOE, in partnership with Kepro, provides the EAP for all K-12 public school teachers and staff in Georgia, along with Pre-K teachers. Household members and children up to age 26 are also eligible.

Services provided by the EAP are confidential and at no cost to you, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Access the EAP by visiting [www.EAPhelpink.com](http://www.EAPhelpink.com) or calling 1-866-279-5177, access code GADOE.

## Georgia Sensory Assistance Project (GSAP) State Needs Assessment

As many of you are aware, GSAP is a federally-funded special education grant

project that supports educators and families of children with combined vision and hearing loss. Every five years, we must submit a grant application that outlines our planned priorities and activities. We are currently writing the new grant for 2023-2028, and it is due very soon.

Understanding the training and resource needs of Georgia Educators is a vital component of our grant writing. We need your input and will use this information to plan services to meet your needs. Please take a few minutes to complete the [GSAP survey](#). We want and value your input, even if you do not currently serve a GSAP student.

If you have any questions, please email Carol Darrah, GSAP Coordinator, at [cdarrah@uga.edu](mailto:cdarrah@uga.edu)

## **Assistive Technology Partnership**

The Georgia Department of Education has contracted with Tools for Life to support assistive technology across the state. Through this contract, Tools for Life has partnered with Texthelp to provide districts access to Read&Write, Equatio and WriQ software. On January 1, 2023, WriQ was removed from the software options. If you have any questions regarding this change, please reach out to Paula Gumpman at [pgumpman@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:pgumpman@doe.k12.ga.us).

## **Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting: 1% Participation Rate on the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0)**

Refresh your perspective on the characteristics, instruction and assessment of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in a virtual, statewide meeting on Tuesday, January 31, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Aimed at facilitating the reduction of Georgia's participation rate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment, participants will examine LEA data, discuss instructional needs and gain insight into the Learner Characteristics Inventory to assure districts are making sound decisions for all students.

[Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting Registration](#)

## **APH Census**

The annual APH census began on January 3, 2023. There are three criteria for



students to qualify for quota funding:

- 1) Blind or Functioning at the Definition of Blind
- 2) Enrolled in a school
- 3) Consent to release PII on file with the GIMC

Districts rely on the consolidated funds to help support the education of students who are blind; therefore, it is imperative that all eligible students are counted. Instruction for authorizing district representatives, updating and adding student records is available at the [Registration and Census webpage](#).

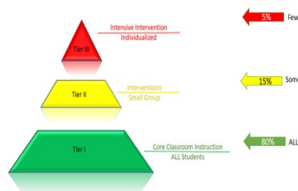
## Important Budget Announcements!

### Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Georgia Residential & Reintegration Services Grant

The Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Georgia Residential & Reintegration Services Grant submission period opens January 1. The updated resources for the Georgia High-Cost Fund Grant and Residential & Reintegration Services Grant can be accessed on the [Budget, Grants and Consolidated Application webpage](#). The deadline for the submission of these grants is February 15. Don't hesitate to contact your budget liaison if you have any additional questions.

### Excess Cost Calculation Submission

The Excess Cost Calculation Portal is now open for submissions. The Special Education Excess Cost Calculation, which is part of the local district determination's Timely and Accurate Data Submission Report, is due by January 31. This submission must be entered into the Consolidated Application and has a two-part sign-off for the results and base calculations. Please plan accordingly as both parts must be submitted by the due date. Resources for the calculation can be found on the [Budget, Grants and Consolidated Application webpage](#). Please contact your budget liaison for further information or technical assistance.



**MTSS Snapshot: What role does the leadership team play in evaluating the effectiveness of Tier I of the multi-level prevention system?**

The foundation of an effective multi-tiered prevention system is providing all students what they need when they need it. In a well-designed Tier I system, most students (or approximately 80% of students) will meet the intended target when Tier I is implemented with fidelity. Some students (or approximately 20% of students) may require, in addition to Tier I, evidence-based interventions to reach the intended target. To evaluate the effectiveness of Tier I, leadership teams play an important role.

As leadership teams meet, a critical part of their conversation should be reflecting on the effectiveness of the Tier I. Ensuring that the Georgia Standards of Excellence are being taught with fidelity, while integrating [High-Leverage Practices | TeachingWorks](#), is essential to providing effective Tier I instruction. In addition, schools may have other instructional non-negotiables/common commitments that are expected to be observed in every classroom.

Data is collected from instructional walks and analyzed to determine the extent to which effective

Tier I instruction is being delivered with fidelity. As leadership teams interpret walk-through, common assessment, and/or progress monitoring data, it is very important to determine if additional resources are needed to implement Tier I as intended. We must not interpret the data to mean that “something is wrong with the student”. Ensuring that the infrastructure is solid to support effective Tier I instruction is crucial [Infrastructure](#). As leadership teams analyze data and determine next steps, considering the sub-components of infrastructure is necessary when improving Tier I of the multi-level prevention system.

For additional information, feel free to reach out to the MTSS regional coaches or Karen Suddeth, [ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us) to learn more.

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January 27, 2023 Email Blast

## Office of Federal Programs - Division for Special Education



*Choose joy*

Directors,

Choosing joy could change your life. Joy is an emotion of feeling great delight or happiness. Joy could also be described as bliss, jubilation or glee. Joy is a very positive emotion. Choosing joy can elicit physical responses such as smiling, laughing or tingling just to mention a few. Choosing joy can be simple but you must put aside beliefs that limit your thinking and expose yourself to positive experiences. Joy can last a lifetime. Stop and think about what brought joy as a child may still bring joy today as an adult. Seeing a carousel with beautiful painted horses, cotton candy, sunshine, rainbows and puppies would all be examples for many of us that would cause a feeling of joy. I had a dear friend and colleague while still in her 40s received a terminal diagnosis of cancer. I asked her one day why she continued to teach as well as all her obligations at church when she was going through so much. Her answer was simple - I choose joy! She explained that choosing joy kept her positive and motivated. She was looking for all the best instead of dwelling on the worst. Although she lost her battle, she always chose joy even in the hardest days. Not long after she was gone, I found a small plaque in a store and knew I had to have it. I used it in my cubicle when we were located downtown, and it hangs on my office wall at home. Hope you enjoy the picture at the top of this message. Life is 90% attitude of how you handle it and 10% of what you make it. Choose joy!

Our district highlight is from Floyd County Schools. At Model Elementary School, staff embarked on a careful study of student performance. Their efforts resulted in restructuring and additional professional learning. Over a five-year period, students experienced a 22.7% growth in English Language Arts scores and 16.9% growth in Mathematics. Way to go, Floyd County Schools and Model Elementary School!

Our new director this week is Debra Wingate from Long County Schools. She brings a wealth of experience to her role having served as a teacher, instructional coordinator, assistant principal and principal. Read more about Debra to learn about Scarlett and Rhett, her cherished German Shorthaired Pointers. So happy to have you in our group.

Our staff spotlight is shining on Lisa Buckner. Lisa joined our GO-IEP team several months ago coming from the State Schools. She is already such a valuable team member. Lisa also has many interests outside of work including a love of travel having visited London, Greece, France, Japan and the Caribbean. Glad you are on our team!



*Carousel in Paris*

We have choices each day. Some choices are big while others are small. Make an intentional choice to take a walk, share ice cream with a friend, embrace imperfection, spread kindness, choose you and choose joy. As Mark Twain said, “The healthiest response to life is joy.”

Thank you for all you do each day for students with disabilities and their families. You bring joy to me each day.

Keeping Students First,  
Wina

## Special Education Events & Due Dates

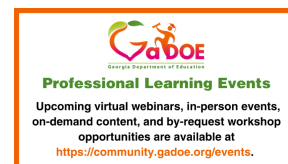
Please review the information below and the Due Dates Calendar for deadlines and key dates.

### Professional Learning Events

**January 31 at 3:00 p.m.** – GVRA: Pathful Explore and IEP Goals

**February 1 at 3:30 p.m.** – Significant Cognitive Disabilities Session 5

**February 2 at 1:00 p.m.** – GAA 2.0 Test Admin Procedures



*Professional Learning  
Events*

**February 9 at 1:30 p.m.** – FY23 Sp Ed SR- Recovering Rejected Events

**February 9 at 3:30 p.m.** – Assistive Technology ( AT) Webinar Session 5

## Reminders

**January 31** – Deadline for Excess Cost Calculation Submission (Located in the Consolidated Application in GaDOE Portal)

**February 1** – Student Record Opens for Data Collection (Indicators 1, 2, & 4)

**February 15** – Final Date to submit Grant for Residential and Reintegration Services Application (SE Applications Dashboard)

**February 15** – Final Date to Submit High Cost Grant Application (Submitted to Budget Liaison using Portal email)

Visit [GaDOE Community](#) for a complete listing of GaDOE Professional Learning Events.



*Debra Wingate,  
Special Education  
Director, Long County  
Schools*

## New Director Spotlight: Debra Wingate

GaDOE's Special Education Services and Supports Division is excited to feature Debra Wingate for our New Director Spotlight this week.

Debra Wingate is the Special Education Director for Long County Schools and has been in the field of education for 26 years. In 1997, Ms. Wingate began her educational career as a second-grade teacher for the Long County School System. Ms. Wingate continued her teaching career as a second-grade teacher, a third grade Science and Social Studies teacher, a fourth grade Language Arts teacher, Science and Social Studies teacher, and a middle school Special Education co-teacher. In 2002, Ms. Wingate was recognized as Teacher of the Year at Smiley Elementary, and in 2007, received recognition as Teacher of the Year at Walker Middle School.

As Ms. Wingate's career moved from teaching students to working with teachers, her experience as an instructional coordinator, for two years, allowed her to collaborate with teachers to help the entire school community to become successful. Ms. Wingate later decided to pursue administration and became an assistant principal for five years and then an elementary school principal for three and a half years. Being an administrator was extremely rewarding because it allowed her to build strong positive relationships with her students, their parents, and her teachers. These relationships greatly impacted their success and growth not only academically, but socially and emotionally.

Ms. Wingate shared that, "her principal consistently provided encouragement,

guidance, and inspired her in advancing her career as she transitioned from being a teacher to becoming an instructional coordinator and school administrator.”

Being married for almost thirty-two years, Ms. Wingate and her husband, Bryan, have two children, Bryan, II (31) and Liz (20), one granddaughter, Addie (5), and two spoiled German Shorthaired Pointers, Scarlett, and Rhett. Attending church, spending quality time with her family, going to the beach, fishing, shark tooth hunting, traveling and reading are what she loves most. One of her most memorable vacations was a trip to Hawaii and with the beach being her happy place, the beaches in Hawaii were exponentially her favorite. Ms. Wingate shared that, “the breathtaking views, beautiful sand, crystal clear water, and authentic food will be remembered for a lifetime.”

## **District Spotlight: Floyd County Schools**

### **Model Elementary School**

Staff at Model Elementary School are keenly aware that active student and family engagement is the foundation of improved achievement. The school has a long history of implementing innovative practices to encourage engagement, including flexible classroom seating, a book vending machine, and an elementary agriculture program.

Recently, following a careful study of student performance data and conducting a Comprehensive Needs Assessment, the school launched new initiatives to better meet the needs of all students, including economically disadvantaged students and students with disabilities. That work included implementation of a schoolwide literacy program – including a 135-minute daily reading block, building teacher capacity to deliver Mathematics standards, improving school climate, and supporting student wellbeing.

Over a five-year period, Model has experienced 22.7% growth in student English Language Arts (ELA) scores and 16.9% growth in Mathematics scores. Model students’ ELA and Mathematics exceed their counterparts in the district, Regional Education Service Agency (RESA), and state.



*Floyd County Schools  
logo*

## **GaDOE Spotlight: Lisa Buckner**

Lisa Buckner has been working in the field of education for 31 years. Currently, she is a Program Specialist in the



*Lisa Buckner,  
Program Specialist,  
Georgia Department  
of Education*

Georgia Online IEP and Data unit. Her experience in education includes teaching PreK-12th grade students in special and general educational settings, Assistant Principal, Deaf/Hard of Hearing Coordinator and Director of Assessment. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Deaf Education from Barton College and her Master of Education degree in Educational Leadership/Supervision from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Lisa was a committee member and the Outreach Coordinator for the Georgia Pathway to Language and Literacy Project. This multifaceted project has had a profound impact on the early identification of children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing, as well as developing a state-wide coordinated longitudinal data management system and assessment monitoring for this population of children. It was her greatest honor to be part of this project which led to the passing of House Bill 844 and to work with stakeholders from a variety of agencies.

Lisa is truly blessed to have a wonderful family. Her husband, Tim, is an electrical contractor, and she has two children, Joshua and Jordan. Josh and his wife, Alex, are currently stationed with the U.S. Navy in Japan where he is serving as a military police officer aboard the USS Ronald Reagan. Jordan and her husband, Trent, live in Madison County with Lisa's two grandsons, Kayden (7) and Malcolm (23 months). In Lisa's off time, she loves to draw and travel. She has been to London, Greece, France, Japan, and the Caribbean.

## **Practice Pointers – USED Guidance on Discipline: Question E-1 and E-2**



*Arrows*

### **QUESTION E-1: IS A MANIFESTATION DETERMINATION REVIEW (MDR) REQUIRED WHEN THE CHILD HAS COMMITTED A VIOLATION OF A SCHOOL'S CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT INVOLVING A REMOVAL DUE TO WEAPONS, DRUGS, OR SERIOUS BODILY INJURY?**

The answer is yes. Within 10 school days of any decision to change the placement of a child with a disability because of a violation of a code of student conduct, the local educational agency (LEA), the parent, and relevant members of the child's individualized education program (IEP) Team must conduct the MDR. 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(e). However, regardless of whether the violation was a manifestation of their disability, when the removal is for weapons, drugs, or

serious bodily injury, under 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(g), the child may remain in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES), as determined by the child's IEP Team, for not more than 45 school days.

## **QUESTION E-2: IS A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY WHO HAS BEEN REMOVED BY SCHOOL PERSONNEL DUE TO CONDUCT INCLUDED WITHIN THE DEFINITION OF “SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES” ENTITLED TO RECEIVE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES?**

The answer is yes. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(d), a child with a disability who has been removed from their current placement pursuant to 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(g) must continue to receive educational services to enable the child to continue to participate in the general education curriculum, although in another setting, and to progress toward meeting the goals set out in the child's IEP. The child must also receive, as appropriate, a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) and behavioral intervention services and modifications that are designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur. These services may be provided in an IAES. 34 C.F.R. § 300.530(d)(2).

For more information, please see the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) guidance found in *Questions and Answers: Addressing the Needs of Children with Disabilities and IDEA's Discipline Provisions* as revised July 19, 2022.

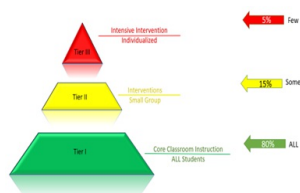
## **Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting: 1% Participation Rate on the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0)**

Refresh your perspective on the characteristics, instruction and assessment of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in a virtual, statewide meeting on Tuesday, January 31, 2023 from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Aimed at facilitating the reduction of Georgia's participation rate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment, participants will examine LEA data, discuss instructional needs and gain insight into the Learner Characteristics Inventory to assure districts are making sound decisions for all students.

Statewide Technical Assistance Meeting Registration

**MTSS Snapshot: What should we**





## consider when building an infrastructure to support Tier I in a multi-level prevention system?

As we consider the effectiveness of Tier I and whether it is meeting the needs of all students, we should analyze data, including sub-group data, and consider actions that will strengthen its infrastructure.

Questions for leadership teams to consider as they work collaboratively to build a supportive infrastructure that increases student outcomes include:

- Are all teachers, including special, gifted and ESOL educators, provided protected time to unpack the standards, discuss differentiation strategies, analyze data, and discuss next steps with their grade-level teams?
- Are all teachers implementing the instructional framework with fidelity (opening, work period and closing)?
- Are effective/active vocabulary strategies being used with fidelity to help reinforce the language of the standard (LOTS)?
- Is formative assessment data being used, with fidelity, throughout the instructional period to check for understanding?
- Are co-teachers effectively planning to meet the needs of all students, with a focus on implementing the small group approaches with fidelity, Co-Teaching Series (gadoe.org)?
- Is specially-designed instruction (SDI) being used effectively to help ensure a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities?
- Are High Leverage Practices being used effectively, High-Leverage Practices in Georgia | CEEDAR (ufl.edu) and Homepage | TeachingWorks to deliver Tier I instruction?
- Are teachers teaching the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) and using district-approved resources that are aligned with the curriculum?

Using reflection questions, such as these, to generate rich conversation can help teams determine what knowledge, resources and organizational structures are needed to build or enhance Tier I.

For additional information, feel free to reach out to the MTSS regional coaches or Karen Suddeth, [ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ksuddeth@doe.k12.ga.us) to learn more.